



## DENISE (17)

*You carefully raised your eyes. He was there. He smiled at you and you smiled back. This situation repeated for about a week and every time the boy was standing a little bit closer. How long will it take before he comes right beside you? He took a few steps in your direction and you decided you'd make it easier for him this time. You went towards him and he smiled again. You were going to smile back as usual but suddenly you heard a voice behind you:*

*"What's up, dyke, did mommy teach you any new tricks back home?" No, please, not today. Before you could do anything they were all around you, hitting you with another shower of cruel jokes. Don't cry, you said to yourself, not in front of them. You knew you had no chance to stop them, you had been the target of their pranks long enough to know that. Finally the bell rang and they went on their way. Did he see it? You looked where he stood, but he was gone. It was clear that the game of smiles and cautious approaching had just ended. Forever. You couldn't hold back the tears anymore.*

Like any teenager, **Denise hates her life**. She feels lonely. Her mom doesn't care about her. Her new wife is horrible. School is hell. If she finally had a boyfriend, everything would change. But who would want her? She's well aware that there's nothing interesting about her and even she wouldn't stop to look at herself. How could anyone love her when she hates herself? Her life is awful and there is no escape from it. Like any teenager, Denise is not able to tell anyone about this. Instead, she wages a quiet war with Veronica, her mom's wife. Actually, it's with her mom, Sabine, as well; her mom who hasn't even noticed yet.

### Fragments from her life

Denise spent a large part of her childhood around hospitals. There was nothing wrong with her but her mom Lea was sick. Ever since Denise can remember, she looked pale, had dark shadows under her eyes and a scarf over her head. They diagnosed her with cancer when Denise was really little and her mom fought cancer for years. Sometimes it even looked like she was getting better but cancer kept coming back again and again, like an unwelcome guest. **When Denise was nine years old, Lea died.**

Before that, Denise thought nothing could be worse than seeing her mom die in a hospital. After her death, she found out how much she was mistaken. Her other mom, **Sabine, had a complete breakdown after Lea's death.** There were days when Sabine couldn't even get out of bed, not even for Denise. It was as if she had died with Lea. **If it weren't for Anna, Denise would have been completely alone.** Anna was Mom Sabine's friend. They met about a year before Lea's death and Anna was with them since then. She helped look after Lea when Sabine couldn't, she arranged the funeral and she kept looking after them even after Lea's death. When Denise got an A in school, it was Anna who patted her on the head and bought her an ice-cream as a reward. For Denise, Anna was the mom that Lea would have been and Sabine wasn't able to be at that time.

After a while, Sabine got herself back together and **Denise believed the three of them would live together happily.** Then Anna got a job offer in a faraway town and her mom told her to accept it instead of asking her to stay. It was a huge disappointment for Denise and she never forgave her mom for it. She's still deeply convinced that Anna wanted to stay and that Sabine is to blame for her leaving.

Denise stayed in contact with Anna even after her departure. They talked almost every day and Denise still confides in her with her troubles. She secretly hoped that Anna would return one day and that she would get back together with her mom. However, **four years ago her mom met Veronica** and the dream was ruined. At first, Denise did everything she could to make Veronica leave them alone but Veronica was undaunted and Denise had to back off in the end. Mom and Veronica got married after two years but Denise never came to terms with it. **Veronica is so annoying,** especially the way she keeps trying to play Denise's friend. As if anyone wanted *that*.

At school, there was always somebody ready with a joke about Denise being the daughter of two lesbians. It was usually just a few individuals and Denise had enough friends from elementary school that she was able to ignore it. When she moved on to high school, the situation got steadily worse. She figured that it would be easiest for her if she could just be invisible. It was a good plan but it proved hard to carry out when her mom was always shouting on the TV that she's a proud lesbian. Soon, **rumours started circulating around school that Denise herself liked girls**; which, of course, drove off any interested boys. It was also a beacon to people looking for someone to torment. The rumors were quite effective at making Denise's life a living hell.

### **Recent events**

When **her mom decided to run in the local elections**, Denise found herself confronted with the choice of what to do next. She knew she wouldn't survive at school without allies. **She chose a group she knew would be sure to hurt her mom**, just like she hurts Denise -- a pack of skinheads who picked on anyone with a different skin color, religion or sexual orientation. Denise is well aware they're a bunch of idiots and she feels sick about a lot of things they do. But it's a question of survival for her! And so, when there was a demonstration against gays and lesbians last week, she followed the rest of the group and shouted the same slogans they did. Mom and Veronica have no idea about it.

Two weeks ago, Sabine mentioned that she had talked with Anna and that Anna and her new partner were coming for a visit. Denise is really looking forward to the visit; she hasn't seen Anna for such a long time!

### **Questions for the night**

It would be good to ask **Daniel** about something, anything, so that he has a chance to shine. For example, ask about his work, his travels, or his plans for the future.

"Anna, what's new with you?" or you can try to think of some old stories from the time that Anna was with you, to make Veronica angry.

### **Who to talk to**

Anna – You haven't seen each other for so long and finally she's here -- you can talk about life with her!

Daniel – If you don't dare flirt with him in front of mom, try it in the next room...

### **Relationships**

#### ***Sabine (46)***

Having Sabine for a mother is difficult. Sure, she's Denise's mom and that means something but she complicates Denise's life. If it weren't for her appearances on TV, Denise would certainly have it easier. Sabine's campaign is based on how great it is to grow up in a lesbian family and Denise hates that. She feels that her mom doesn't care about her happiness and she maybe never has. The only thing that matters to her is her work and the fight for a better life for lesbians... and maybe Veronica. Denise is and always has been the last one on the list.

Denise usually doesn't get into open conflict with her mom but that could easily change .

#### ***Veronica (35)***

Denise sees Veronica as an intruder, someone who stole Anna's place. She found out quickly that she could **hurt her most by comparing her to Anna**, so her main weapons are phrases like: "Anna would never do that," "Anna would know what I like," and "You'd never understand, only Anna gets it." Veronica, on the other hand, can reliably make her mad by trying to be her friend. Since mom married Veronica, their battles have been waged out of Sabine's sight but with increasing animosity.

Veronica never drinks alcohol, though they normally have it at parties at home.

#### ***Anna (37)***

Anna is a person who has never disappointed Denise. Denise wishes so much that she had never left and that she had stayed with them instead. Sabine would surely be a better mom if Anna had stayed with her. Even

though Anna lives far away now, she and Denise are still close. However, Denise hasn't been able to say how bad her life is, even to Anna. She hasn't said a word about the group she spends her time with to Anna either. If Anna found out about that, Denise would be really embarrassed.

***Daniel (26)***

Daniel is Veronica's cousin. Denise has only met him a few times but he seems nice. Now he's in the town for a few days and he's spent a few evenings with them already; he'll be at the party tonight too. Denise is trying to pick him up and she's been flirting with him. She hasn't been very successful thus far but she doesn't want to give up. **Having a boyfriend (and an older one at that) would solve a lot of her problems** (and it might make both mom and Veronica angry).